



# Town Of Sterling

## **Board of Health**

Butterick Building

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### **BOARD OF HEALTH COMMUNICATION POLICY**

This policy is hereby adopted by the Sterling Board of Health to ensure that the Board is able to conduct its business in a fair and efficient manner and in accordance with applicable laws and regulations regarding the conduct of public business.

#### **Communications by Board Members**

- As a multiple member body, the Board and its members are subject to the requirements of the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law, Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 30A, Sections 18 to 25, and the Board can only act by the vote of a majority of its members.
- As required by the Law, there shall be no communications amongst a quorum of the Board outside of a duly noticed public meeting.
- No member of the Board, or anyone acting on their behalf, shall contact any other member of the Board by e-mail, telephone, text message, or direct social media message with respect to any business of the Board, other than for purposes of scheduling or the distribution of documents to be discussed at a meeting.
- The Health Agent and the Board's Assistant shall be copied on all written communications relating to the business of the Board, including communications with other Board members, staff, Town officials, applicants, engineers and/or members of the public.
- Members of the Board are encouraged not to discuss Board business with third-parties outside of a duly posted meeting, unless they are authorized to do so by vote of the Board. This includes communications with applicants, engineers and other parties with business before the Board. If any such communications occur, the member shall make clear that they are speaking on their own behalf only and that they are not authorized to make statements that are binding on the Board.
- Members of the Board are encouraged to refrain from posting about Board business on social media. If members engage in discussions about Board business on social media, they shall make it clear that they are speaking on their own behalf as a private citizen and that they are not posting on behalf of the Board.
- Members are reminded that all written communications relating to the business of the Board are public records and must be maintained as such, even if the communications are sent from personal accounts or devices. This includes e-mails, text messages and social media posts.

### **Communications by Members of the Public**

- Members of the public wishing to communicate with the Board shall request an appointment on the Board's agenda through the Health Agent or the Board's assistant.
- Requests for appointments must be received at the office of the Board of Health at least three days prior to a regularly scheduled meeting to be considered at that meeting.
- Except in an emergency or other circumstance requiring immediate action by the Board, requests for appointments not received in a timely manner will be postponed.
- The determination of whether or not to place an item on the Board's agenda for discussion rests in the sole discretion of the Chair or acting Chair. The Chair or acting Chair will endeavor to provide Board members and members of the public with a fair opportunity to address their issues and the Chair or acting Chair will not unreasonably deny any requests to place a topic on the agenda.
- If any person wishes to have the Board consider documents, plans or written materials, they must be provided or made available to all Board members at least forty-eight hours prior to the meeting. Any written material not made available in a timely manner will not be considered. This includes requests by members for amendments to draft meeting minutes.
- Members of the public are reminded that individual Board members cannot respond to electronic communications or engage in discussions outside of a duly noticed-meeting, and it shall be understood that any communications from individual Board members are not binding on the Board, unless authorized by a vote of the Board.
- Members of the public may contact the Health Agent by electronic mail or telephone and the Agent may answer questions, provide information and render decisions within the scope of his/her authority.

### **Meetings of the Board**

- The Chair shall preside over all meetings of the Board, unless the Chair is absent or not participating due to conflict of interest, in this case the Vice Chair shall preside. In other cases the Chair or Vice Chair may in his/her discretion delegate the duties of Chair to another member.
- No person, including Board members, shall speak during a meeting unless recognized by the Chair or acting Chair.
- Any person recognized to speak during a meeting shall confine their remarks to the matter for which they were recognized.
- While the Board's meetings are required to be open for public viewing, no member of the public has a right to address the Board or to speak during the meeting unless they are recognized by the Chair or acting Chair. The Chair or acting Chair will recognize speakers in his/her sole discretion, but he/she will not unreasonably prevent individuals from addressing the Board with respect to topics on the Board's agenda.
- The Chair or acting Chair will not allow discussion of any topic not identified on the meeting agenda, as posted with the Town Clerk, except in a case of emergency as determined by the Chair or acting Chair.
- During meetings conducted via remote video streaming platforms, the chat feature will be disabled. The chat feature will not be used during any meeting of the Board unless authorized by the Chair or acting Chair.

- All persons attending meetings of the Board will behave with civility and courtesy. The Chair or acting Chair will preserve decorum and prevent personal attacks. No one in attendance at a meeting will be allowed to make disparaging remarks about anyone, including Board members and staff. The Chair or acting Chair will rule inappropriate comments out of order and issue warnings to the offending party.
- Anyone who disrupts the meeting or who refuses to comply with the directives of the Chair or acting Chair will be removed from the meeting.